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DE RUEHUJA #1296 1971616
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 161616Z JUL 09
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6563
INFO RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS PRIORITY 1654
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 2000
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0960
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABUJA 001296

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DEPT FOR AF/W, INR/AA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/10/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KIRF](#) [KISL](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: KANO GOVERNOR SPONSORS FIRST ISLAMIC
SUMMIT

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter N.S. Pflaumer for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: The Governor of Kano State, Ibrahim Shekarau of the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), sponsored two days of meetings he termed the First Islamic Summit on June 29-30. The summit appeared to be first and foremost a platform for the Governor to promote his political agenda, providing for himself an opportunity to speak before more than 200 clerics, elected officials and members of civil society. He called for better governance by utilizing the tenants of Islam, and working together to meet modern-day needs. Speakers over the two days were clerics, educators, and elected officials. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) The Summit was well-attended by high ranking Islamic officials and scholars from northern Nigeria, including the Emir of Kano, the Sultan of Sokoto, and the leadership of the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs. German and French Emboffs, as well as Poloff, also attended. Several speakers noted Poloff's attendance, specifically calling on the USG to recognize that Islam is not synonymous with terrorism. Poloff gave a message of appreciation for the opportunity to demonstrate USG desire to listen and learn, partnering with Islamic institutions in promoting common understanding.

CAMPAIGN SPEAKING

¶3. (C) Governor Shekarau argued that Islamic tenants should be applied to modern needs for justice, equality before the law, due process, an independent judiciary and an improved education system. As Kano State is already under a system of Shari'a law, and he has always been its vocal champion, this conference theme pointed to changes needed at the federal level. Further national focus included the success of Malaysia and Turkey generating much needed income and employment through tourism. He is looking to leverage microfinance, entrepreneurship, women business owners, modernization of infrastructure, transportation and communications to improve the economy, all national issues.

CALL FOR ETHICS REFORM USING ISLAMIC TENANTS

¶4. (U) The recurrent conference theme was the failure of the federal government and its constitution. Speakers claimed that Islam will bring a more ethical governance and should be

used as a basis for a new constitution bringing on a true federalism, reducing central power and increasing power to the states. Many remarks called for a stronger Islamic voice in Nigerian governance, coming from both northern elected officials and clerics. The Sultan of Sokoto charged that the current government allows evil to propagate in society, demanding it be redirected to ensure stronger moral tenants, but gave no specifics. There was no mention of minority rights, or of any consideration of the tenants of any other religion.

15. (C) COMMENT: For the Governor of Kano to call an Islamic Summit for the first time, in the 6th of his 8 years in office is unusual, when he could have done this on day one of his administration. Given that most of the country is already in 2011 election mode, we see Shekarau's actions to pull together this conference as more of a pre-election move. The theme of his speech was his vision of change for the future, leading to the conclusion that he is not winding down his political ambitions, but preparing for the future in a wider arena. Indeed, there has been press speculation that Shekarau may be seeking the nomination of his ANPP party for the Presidency in 2011. We also expect to see more pressure from these energetic Islamic voices as the central government continues to fail to meet the needs of its people. END COMMENT

16. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.
SANDERS